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Plastech will close Andover plant

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ANDOVER - - Plastech will begin laying off its 182 employees in mid-August and will shut down the automotive parts factory completely, Andover Mayor Bernard Baranowski said Thursday.

The bad news came in a letter delivered to Baranowski's office on Thursday and confirmed reports that employees had learned of the plant's fate earlier this week.

"I'm pretty shocked," he said.

Layoffs will begin Aug. 14 "or within 14 days thereafter" and will occur in phases, Baranowski said, quoting the letter. No final closing date is mentioned, he said.

Twenty-nine of the jobs are salaried positions, Baranowski said. The letter gives no explanation for the closing, he said.

"It's really brief," Baranowski said. "It doesn't go into details."

Employees who contacted the Star Beacon on Wednesday said workers were given their 60-day notice a day earlier and informed their last day of work will be Aug. 13. Calls to the plant were directed to the Plastech Engineered Products headquarters in Dearborn, Mich. Officials there have not returned calls seeking comment.

Plastech came to Ashtabula County in early 2005, after it purchased the former Andover Industries in a bankruptcy court auction. The business manufactures interior and exterior parts for the automotive industry.

The Plastech decision will take a financial toll on the village's budget, Baranowski said. Municipal income-tax collections, and the operations they support, certainly will suffer, he said.

"It will be a substantial blow to us," Baranowski said.

Andover is still trying to cope with the loss of the Parker Hannifin plant in 2002.

"That really hindered some of our projected goals," he said.

Unsettling rumors about Plastech reached Baranowskis office late last week, but Thursdays letter was still a jolt, he said. Just a few months ago, village officials had learned the company was talking with Growth Partnership for Ashtabula County about reinvestment opportunities, he said.

Andover Industries filed for bankruptcy in October 2004. Plastech Engineered Products purchased the company for \$5.23 million in a sale that included the Andover operation and those in Moraine and Meadville, Pa.

One year ago, workers fretted over the future of the plant and the impact of new ownership. Termination notices were issued while the sales effect on labor agreements was examined. More than two dozen workers were laid off in Andover soon after the transaction was completed, and union leaders said, at the time, more cuts were feared. An estimated 350 people worked at Andover Industries when the transaction occurred, officials said.